U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Advancing Freedom and Democracy Reports - 2008
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Part 1

Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two multiethnic entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. The 1995 Dayton Peace Accords established the Office of the High Representative (OHR) to supervise implementation of the civilian aspects of the accords, including final authority to interpret the accords (including Annex IV, the constitution) and special powers to remove obstructionist officials and impose legislation. The country has a population of approximately four million; the Federation has a Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) and Bosnian Croat majority, while the Republika Srpska has a Bosnian Serb majority. The government's human rights record remains poor; although there have been improvements in some areas, serious problems remain. In 2007 there were reports of increased deaths from landmines, police abuses, poor and overcrowded prison conditions, increased harassment and intimidation of journalists and members of civil society, discrimination and violence against women and ethnic and religious minorities, discrimination against persons with disabilities and sexual minorities, obstruction of refugee return, trafficking in persons, and limits on employment rights.

Part 2

The U.S. government's highest priority is to facilitate Bosnia's full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community to ensure that its future will be stable, democratic, and prosperous. Nearly 13 years after the Dayton Accords ended the 1992-1995 war, the country remains deeply divided along ethnic lines. These divisions undermine the country's ability to perform basic governance. To address these issues, the United States is assisting with defense, law enforcement, judicial and constitutional reforms, and the development of state-level, democratic institutions. In these areas, U.S. assistance targets programming that supports U.S. priorities and meets European Union (EU) human rights and rule of law standards. The United States uses diplomatic engagement with interlocutors from the OHR, the foreign diplomatic corps, international organizations, local NGOs, and government agencies in coordinated efforts to implement decisions made by the Peace Implementation Council as well as to monitor and, when necessary, to counter actions that limit democratic freedoms and human rights**.** The United States also seeks to foster government accountability at all levels. The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy aims to strengthen law enforcement, judicial, and political institutions to protect vulnerable populations, including ethnic minorities and victims of trafficking in persons, from discrimination and violence while also ensuring transparency in the judicial process and combating corruption. To counter nationalism and promote the truth and reconciliation necessary for a sustainable and sovereign future, the United States supports the development of moderate political parties and efforts to overcome the legacy of war. Public diplomacy programs solidify public support for necessary government reforms while also promoting civic education, participation, and advocacy.

Part 3

U.S. assistance strengthens the rule of law and has been critical to transforming law enforcement and judicial institutions from paper organizations into capable institutions. With U.S. financial, technical, and political support, the country has made significant strides in developing its capacity to investigate and try war crimes cases, as well as cases involving official corruption, tax evasion, and money laundering, especially through secondment of U.S.-funded prosecutors and judges to the Office of the State Prosecutor and the State Court. The United States supports intensive training programs for police, prosecutors, and judges to increase skills in subjects such as crime scene investigation, chain of custody, and searches and seizures while providing a mechanism for open dialogue between law enforcement and the judiciary. The U.S. government has advocated police reforms that will allow the country to meet EU conditions for the signing of a Stabilization and Association Agreement.

The United States remains committed to supporting post-conflict efforts to confront nationalism, promote reconciliation, and restore a culture of tolerance. Through U.S. funding, the International Commission on Missing Persons continues to collect blood samples to help identify persons reported missing during the 1992-1995 conflict. More than 16,000 individuals have been identified with the aid of the United States, including 3,369 from the Srebrenica genocide. The funding has also trained staff of the Missing Persons Institute, supported victims' associations, and provided forensic evidence for war crimes proceedings. The United States supports the publication of a comprehensive reference on war crimes cases and convictions and provided prosecutors and judges the opportunity to travel to The Hague to interact with their counterparts at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. A U.S.-funded justice sector development program improves the efficiency, transparency, and fairness of the justice system by strengthening the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council with its mandate to appoint and discipline all sitting judges and to build the Ministry of Justice's ability to manage strategic planning and policy making, budgeting, donor coordination, and European integration. The successful "model court" project has helped 17 courts in the country to reduce case backlogs and improve efficiency and responsiveness to the public.

The United States focuses on supporting the development of moderate political parties as an alternative to nationalism. The United States also works with parliament with the goal of strengthening political processes and decision-making around key issues on which social and political consensus can be achieved. A U.S.-supported governance accountability project bolsters local governments' ability to respond efficiently to the needs of its citizens while also streamlining processes that might otherwise be prone to corruption or discrimination against ethnic minorities. Public diplomacy programs promote public support for necessary government reforms and strengthen confidence in state-level institutions to ensure they are sustainable, while also promoting tolerance through nationwide civic education programs. The United States supports a wide range of public diplomacy programs, university linkages, and International Visitor Leadership Programs designed to expose Bosnians to U.S. institutions and values. U.S. civic education programs reach students from kindergarten through secondary school, teacher training programs, and madrassas (Muslim secondary schools) throughout the country.

Part 4

To address challenges to press freedoms, the United States continues to support the development of an independent and professional media. Specifically, the U.S. government assists independent media that pursue professionalism, accountability, and investigative reporting. While many local media outlets are influenced by political parties and other sources of political and economic influence, U.S. funding bolsters alternative media sources and promotes multi-ethnic programming. The U.S. government also supports associations that protect professional standards of reporting and help protect press freedom. To assist the promotion of truth and reconciliation, the U.S. government supports a local radio station's production of a radio series on war crimes committed locally.

The United States continues a civic advocacy partnership program with NGOs to strengthen their advocacy, coalition building, and watch-dog capabilities and to address citizen needs through education, advocacy, and provision of services. The United States also funds local NGO projects to increase civic participation in decision-making processes through various public advocacy campaigns. These campaigns focus on issues such as: transparency in government, political and economic empowerment of women in society, constitutional reforms, corruption, abuse of human rights (including violence against children, women, and minorities), reconciliation and tolerance, sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons, development of diversity, and tolerance in media.

U.S.-funded initiatives also promote respect for the rights of marginalized groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities, and minority groups. The United States continues to facilitate the return of refugees and persons displaced by the 1992-1995 conflict, the majority of whom are ethnic minorities. The United States supports an advocacy program to develop the public media capacities of 15 Roma Associations, including the establishment of a Roma Information Center and

publication of a Roma Magazine, in an effort to break down stereotypes and combat discrimination. U.S. assistance also enables the continued support of antitrafficking efforts. A new program extends antitrafficking education throughout the secondary school system and to children who do not attend school and improves reintegration programs for national victims. The United States funds several one-day, regional antitrafficking workshops targeting judges, prosecutors, and police. Topics of instruction include the treatment of minor victims, including sensitive interrogation techniques, minors as witnesses, and special considerations of family complicity. The United States supports the national-level antitrafficking strike force with technical advice and training.

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